U.S. Marines in the Middle East, 1991

Full-Color Plate

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Shown in this plate are the various uniforms worn by Marines participating in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. These uniforms are current as of 16 January 1991, D-Day for Desert Storm. It should be noted, however, that uniform regulations are never static, but reflect changing situations and requirements.

In the past, the Marine Corps has had little need for uniforms specifically designed for the desert environment. Historically, the closest predecessor to a desert uniform was a camouflage uniform, printed with a green pattern on one side and brown on the other, issued to Marine raiders, parachutists, and scout-snipers during World War II. The modern-day desert camouflage utility uniforms are part of the "Battle Dress Uniform" system adopted by the Army in 1979 to provide suitable field and combat uniforms for varying environments. Marines are issued these uniforms as special-purpose clothing when needed. Although the desert uniform has been worn for desert training and field exercises since its adoption, it was not actually worn in a hostile environment until the deployment of Marines to the Middle East during Operation Desert Shield, which began in August 1990 as a prelude to Operation Desert Storm.

At the far left is a woman Marine lance corporal in the standard six-color "chocolate chip" desert utility uniform for daytime wear. The 50 percent cotton/50 percent nylon coat, trousers, and flat-top bush hat are worn with a brown undershirt and black leather boots. Efforts are underway to make this uniform lighter in weight and thus more comfortable. Additionally, steps have been taken to procure utilities of a three-color tan camouflage pattern which studies have shown to be superior to the present six-color pattern. A desert camouflage field jacket in the three-color pattern will be added to the desert wardrobe for wear during inclement weather. Although Marines may wear the black leather combat boots with this uniform, most opt to wear the jungle boots because of their lighter weight. Due to the threat of chemical or biological agent warfare, a carrying case containing the hooded M17A2 gas mask is worn on the left hip at all times.

Second from left is a Marine carrying an M16A2 rifle and attired in the M17A2 gas mask and special clothing designed to afford protection against contamination from nuclear, biological, or chemical (NBC) warfare. The layered fabric of the two-piece overgarment consists of a wind-resistant cotton poplin outer shell lined with a polyester tricot knit material which has been impregnated with charcoal to soak up any chemical agent before it comes in contact with the skin. It should be noted that while the fabric has the green woodland camouflage pattern used for the standard utility uniform, new NBC suits will be in the six-shade desert coloration. They also will be lighter in weight than the current clothing. Special gloves and overshoes shield the hands and feet. All these items are part of the Marine's Mission Oriented Protective Posture (MOPP) gear. An M258 skin decontamination kit is carried for emergency use.

In the center background is an F/A-18 pilot wearing a tri-service (Air Force/Navy/Marine Corps) Clothing Special Unit (CSU-13/P) cutaway anti-gravity garment ("G suit"). Basic survival equipment is contained in the modified Parachute Component Unit (PCU) series torso harness and Life Preserver (LPU). Flight boots with a leather upper body, steel "safety toes," and non-slip soles are an essential part of flight clothing, as is the lightweight Helmet Gear Unit (HGU 55/P). A pistol and shoulder holster are worn on his left side.

In the center foreground is a lieutenant general participating in Desert Storm wearing the standard desert utility uniform, with the addition of a 9mm pistol and cartridge belt. Unlike the others shown in this uniform, this figure is wearing recently approved tan desert combat boots which are modeled after the jungle boots. However, they are lighter in weight, unvented to keep sand out, have no metal plate insteps, incorporate speed lacing, and have built-in ankle supports to prevent sprains while operating in sandy terrain.

The Marine second from right is dressed in the cotton-and-nylon poplin nighttime desert uniform in the "desert green grid pattern" which affords camouflage protection for desert operations after dark. Consisting of a hooded parka with removable quilted liner and drawstring trousers, this uniform is designed to be worn over the standard desert uniform to provide extra warmth.

At far right is a Marine in full combat gear with weapon. The lightweight body armor and field pack are the same worn with other combat uniforms and have desert utility covers to make them color compatible. Essential accessories include the standard Kevlar anti-fragmentation helmet with desert camouflage cover and ballistic laser eye protection goggles which will shield the wearer's eyes from harmful ultraviolet rays from the desert sun during the day. The field neckerchief worn over the face offers added protection from blowing sand.

HISTORY AND MUSEUMS DIVISION AND THE
PERMANENT MARINE CORPS UNIFORM BOARD
HEADQUARTERS, U.S. MARINE CORPS
WASHINGTON, D.C.

1991

Desert Camouflage Utilities

Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Warfare (NBC) Defense Ensemble

Flying Ensemble (F/A-18 Pilot)

Desert Camouflage Utilities with Weapon

Nighttime Desert Camouflage Utilities

Desert Camouflage Utilities with Field Equipment

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